

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

SAJ-01 IO-11 ACDA-05 DHA-02 AID-05 OMB-01 /085 W

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R 050730Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9721

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY BONN

ORUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1088

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT PINR CZ

SUBJECT: THOUGHTS ON CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP GOING INTO THE  
15TH PARTY CONGRESS

REF: PARGUE A-24

1. THE FOLLOWING IS A CONDENSED VERSION OF THE EMBASSY'S A-24  
OF MARCH 9, 1976

2 SUMMARY: AT THE APRIL 12TH COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS HUSAK  
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WILL LIKELY RETAIN HIS DOUBLE POSITION AS PRESIDENT AND COMMUNIST

PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL. TOO, HE WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP HIS OPPONENTS IN CHECK. NEVERTHELESS, HUSAK HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE ACTIVE LEADERSHIP BECAUSE HE DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT ROOM TO MANEUVER BETWEEN THE LEFTIST AND RIGHTIST FACTIONS WHICH HEM HIM IN. IN EFFECT, HUSAK IS A CARETAKER HEAD OF STATE. THE CHIEF INTEREST IN THE CONGRESS WILL LIE IN SEEING WHETHER HUSAK CAN SHED HIS ROLE OF CARETAKER FOR THAT OF LEADER. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT THE CONGRESS WILL BE A ROUTINE EVENT AND NOT BRING ANY GREAT CHANGES. END OF SUMMARY

3. WHY HUSAK WILL LIKELY RETAIN HIS TWO OFFICES-- THE 15TH PARTY CONGRESS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA CONVENES APRIL 12, 1976. HUSAK WILL LIKELY EMERGE FROM CONGRESS WITH DOUBLE POSITION

AS PRESIDENT AND PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY INTACT. THE CHIEF REASON IS THAT HUSAK RETAINS CONFIDENCE OF SOVIET LEADERSHIP, AS EVIDENCED BY TREMENDOUS PERSONAL RECEPTION RECEIVED DURING NOVEMBER TRIUMPHAL TOUR OF SOVIET UNION. SECOND, HUSAK'S REGIME HAS MUCH TO ITS CREDIT; IT BROUGHT ORDER OUT OF THE 1968 CHAOS, IT HAS SEEN INCREASED INDUSTRIAL GROWTH, WAGES AND AVAILABILITY OF CONSUMER GOODS. TOO, CZECHOSLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY HAS ATTAINED SOME SUCCESS IN BREAKING OUT OF ISOLATION FROM 1968 PERIOD. FINALLY, HUSAK IS IN GOOD HEALTH AND AT AGE 63 AT PEAK OF HIS POWERS.

4. HUSAK WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO CONTAIN HIS RIVALS --HUSAK WILL LIKELY SURVIVE CONGRESS WITH POWERS INTACT BECAUSE HIS CONSERVATIVE RIVALS HAVE NOT BECOME MORE ATTRACTIVE OR ABLE THAN THEY WERE AT TIME OF HIS SUCCESSFUL MOVE IN MAY 1975 TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY. HUSAK'S REPUTATION AS A REALIST GIVES HIM A POPULAR EDGE OVER CONSERVATIVE RIVALS WHO ARE WIDELY NOTED FOR THEIR SINCERE PRO-SOVIETISM. IN THIS RESPECT SOVIETS PRESUMABLY HAVE DECIDED THEY DEAL BETTER WITH A CZECHOSLOVAKIA HEADED BY A MYSTERIOUS PETAIN THAN BY AN OUT AND OUT QUISLING.

5. A NEW SIGN OF HUSAK'S ABILITY TO HOLD ON? -- DURING PRE-CONGRESS PERIOD MEDIA CONTENT HAS BECOME SPARSER THAN EVER BEFORE AND RUMOR MILL HAS NEARLY SLOWED TO A HALT. THIS DRYING

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UP OF SIGNS OF DISCUSSION AND CONTROVERSY MAY MEAN THAT HUSAK LEADERSHIP, WITH BACKING OF ITS SOVIET CONSTITUTENCY, HAS SUCCESSFULLY PUT END TO MUCH EXPRESSION OF DIFFERENCES WITHIN PARTY ITSELF. IMMEDIATE REASON FOR TIGHTENING FIXTURES IS TO PERVENT DISCUSSIONS WHICH MIGHT CLOUD PARTY CONGRESS PERIOD. HOWEVER, MORE THAN JUST THE CONGRESS WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY UNWANTED DISCUSSION.

6. HUSAK HEMMED IN BY CONSERVATIVES -- HUSAK WISHES TO STRANGLE DISCUSSION BECAUSE ONLY THOSE MORE CONSERVATIVE THAN HE WILL PROFIT FROM CONTROVERSY. CONSERVATIVE VICTORIES SIMPLY RESULT IN WHOLE REGIME MOVING FURTHER TO THE RIGHT, AS HAS HAPPENED TIME AND AGAIN. POINT IS THAT HUSAK IS NOT YET STRONG ENOUGH VIS-A-VIS CONSERVATIVE PRESIDUM COLLEAGUES TO EMBARK ON ANY LIBERAL COURSE; RATHER HE HAS ONLY ENOUGH POWER TO HOLD HIS GROUND OR TO GIVE IT UP SLOWLY.

7. HUSAK HEMMED IN BY LIBERALS -- MOREOVER, HUSAK'S ROOM FOR MANEUVER CIRCUMSCRIBED BY LIBERALS WHOM HE CANNOT DISMISS WITHOUT PRECIPITATING POSSIBILITY OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS. THE MAIN PROBLEM FOR NOW FOCUSES ON HOW TO DEAL WITH DISSIDENTS. WHAT ADVERSELY AFFECTS THE FEW DISSIDENTS WHO ARE ALWAYS AFTER HUSAK'S THROAT COULD WELL AROUSE THE DORMANT BUT LARGE LEFT WING, MUCH OF WHICH CONSISTS OF THE HALF MILLION CZECHOSLOVAKS WHO WERE OUSTED FROM THE PARTY AFTER 1968. IF HUSAK IS NOT ABLE TO PLEASE THIS LEFT WING HE WISHES AT LEAST TO LEAVE IT ALONE. DESPITE HIS NOTORIOUS SPRING 1975 CONDEMNATION OF DUBCEK AND A FEBRUARY SPEECH HITTING A SIMILAR NOTE--WHICH HE WAS PROBABLY FORCED TO MAKE TO PLACATE PRESIDUM CONSERVATIVES--HUSAK HAS NO NATURAL INCLINATION TO TANGLE WITH THE DISSENTERS AND WILL DO SO ONLY WHEN PUSHED HARD BY THE CONSERVATIVES.

8. HUSAK THE CARETAKER -- THE TRAGEDY OF HUSAK (IF A PHRASE LIKE THIS CAN BE APPLIED AT ALL TO THE HEAD OF A TOTALITARIAN STATE) IS THAT HE IS CAUGHT BETWEEN THE LIBERALS AND THE CONSERVATIVES WITH ONLY ENOUGH SPIELRAUM TO STAY IN POWER AND CONTROL. THERE IS NOT ENOUGH ROOM IN WHICH HE CAN FIND THE FREEDOM TO LEAD. IN FACT, UP UNTIL NOW HUSAK HAS BEEN LESS A LEADER THAN A STRONG CARETAKER WHO IS HOLDING DOWN THE POSITION FOR A FUTURE SUCCESSOR WHO WILL HAVE SUFFICIENT POWER TO LEAD CZECHOSLOVAKIA TOWARD THE SOLUTION OF ITS BASIC PROBLEMS.  
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9. CZECHOSLOVAKIA WITHOUT LEADERSHIP -- WITH CARETAKER HUSAK IN CHARGE, CONTROLLING BUT NOT LEADING, PROBLEMS HINDERING

CZECHOSLOVAK DEVELOPMENT CANNOT BE REALISTICALLY TACKLED, E.G., PROBLEMS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, OF HOW TO IMPROVE

THE QUALITY AND COMPETIVENESS OF CZECHOSLOVAK PRODUCTS AND THE DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING THE SOVIET UNION AS CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S LARGEST TRADING PARTNER. HENCE, CARETAKER HUSAK IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO OPEN THE MEAGEREST BEGINNINGS OF A DISCUSSION WHICH MIGHT EVENTUALLY LEAD TO WITHDRAWAL FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA OF SOVIET TROOPS. IRONICALLY SUCH TASKS AS THIS MIGHT BE BETTER HANDLED BY THE MOREPRO-SOVIET LIKES OF PRESIDUM MEMBERS INDRA AMA BILAK. IT IS JUST FOR THIS REASON THAT SOVIETS WILL

PROBABLY KEEP HUSAK IN POWER AFTER THE PARTY CONGRESS; THEY

CAN TRUST A NEUTRALIZED CARETAKER MORE THAN THEY  
CAN TRUST THE CONSERVATIVES WHO ARE DEVOTED TO THEM BUT WHOSE  
LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL MAY BE GREATER THAN HUSAK'S.

10. EVIDENCES OF NO DIRECTION -- THE CZECHOSLOVAK PRESS  
BETRAYS A PRONOUNCED LACK OF DIRECTION FROM THE TOP. ARTICLES  
WHICH CALL FOR CRITICISM FAIL TO CRITICIZE. ARTICLES WHICH REVILE

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SAJ-01 IO-11 ACDA-05 DHA-02 AID-05 OMB-01 /085 W  
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R 050730Z MAR 76  
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9722  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW  
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BOURGEOIS INFLUENCES IN THE ARTS AND EDUCATION FAIL TO POINT TO  
ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF BOURGEOIS INFLUENCES. OTHER ARTICLES  
CALL FOR CUTTING THE DEADWOOD FROM THE PARTY BUT AT THE SAME  
TIME CONCLUDE THAT PERSONAL PROBLEMS OF MEMBERS WHOSE  
STATUS IS IN QUESTION MUST BE TAKEN FAVORABLY INTO CONSIDERA-

TION. NOBODY KNOWS WHAT TO DO, WHOM OR WHOM NOT TO ATTACK. NEITHER MANAGERS, JOURNALISTS NOR POLITICIANS ARE GIVEN BROAD GUIDELINES WITHIN WHICH TO THINK OR ACT. LIKE BRER RABBIT "THEY LAY LOW" WHILE THE COUNTRY CONTINUES TO RUN; BUT INEFFICIENTLY AND WITH AN AGING INDUSTRIAL PLANT.

11. WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE 15TH PARTY CONGRESS? -- EFFICINECY AND GROWTH OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL CONTINUE TO SUFFER (NOT TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENTION THE MENTAL STATE OF THOSE WHO LIVE HERE) AS LONG AS CARETAKER HUSAK CONTINUES TO STIFLE DISCUSSION OF BASIC PROBLEMS AND FAILS TO PROVIDE LIBERAL DIRECTIVES NEEDED TO GIVE INDIVIDUALS ROOM FOR THEIR INITIATIVES. UNLIKE SOME OTHER EE LEADERS, CARETAKER HUSAK IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO TOLERATE DISCUSSION OR TO PROMULATE LIBERAL DIRECTIVES. UNLESS HE EMERGES FROM THE 15TH PARTY CONGRESS WITH NEW CLOUT OVER THE CONSERVATIVES, HIS CARETAKERSHIP WILL CONTINUE UNABATED AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL CONTINUE TO SINK TO THE BOTTOM OF VEREY-ONE'S LIST OF EE COUNTRIES.

12. ON WATCHING THE 15TH PARTY CONGRESS--

A. HUSAK'S CARETAKERSHIP -- THE 15TH PARTY CONGRESS WATCHERS WILL THEREFORE BE LOOKING AT THE SPEECHES, THE CONGRESS RESOLUTION AND ANY CHANGES IN THE LEADERSHIP TO DETECT SIGNS OF WHETHER HUSAK HAS SUCCEEDED IN SHEDDING HIS ROLE OF CARETAKER FOR A ROLE AS LEADER

B. ON RECONCILIATION -- ONE ISSUE WHOSE COUTCOME MAY SHED LIGHT ON HOW HUSAK STATDS VAIA-A-VIS THE CONSERVATIVES IS THAT OF WHETHER SOME OF THE HALF MILLION FORMER PARTY MEMBERS WILL BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO RETURN TO THE PARTY FOLD. MORE THAN LIKELY HUSAK FAVORS SOME DGREE OF RECONCILIATION WHICH WOULD BE ENOUGH TO HELP DISCREDIT THE TROUBLESOME DISSIDENTS, INGRATIAIE HIM WITH THE REST OF THE LEFT WING AND NOT GET HIM IN SERIOUS TROUBLE WITH THE CONSERVATIVES WHO TAKE A DIM VIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION. IF SOME RECONCILIATION IS TO TAKE PLACE, AND TRIAL BALLOONS HAVE BEEN APPEARING IN THE PRESS FOR THE LAST SEVEN OR EIGHT MONTHS, IT WOULD LIKELY BE TIED TO THE PARTY CONGRESS. THE WIDEST PUBLICITY COULD THEN BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO RECANTED AND AT THE SAME TIME THEY WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUBLICLY SUBSCRIBE TO A STRONGLY WORDED DOCUMENT, I.E., THE CONGRESS RESOLUTION. HUSAK'S SUCCESS IN BOTAINING RECONCILIATION WILL NOT BE JUDGED NECESSARILY BY THE NUMBER WHO RETURN TO THE PARTY (IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT LARGE NUMBERS WANT TO RETURN UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS), BUT THE LENIENCY OF THE TERMS HE OBTAINS FOR THEM. ONE THEORY GOING ABOUT PRAGUE IS THAT HUSAK WILL MAKE CONCILIATORY MOVES AT CONGRESS BUT, AT SAME TIME, COVER HIMSELF WITH CONSERVATIVES BY STRONG HARD LINE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND IDEOLOGY WHICH WOULD INCLUDE HARSHER LINE TOWARD THE DISSIDENTS. WE DOUBT,

HOWEVER, THE LEADERSHIP WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO PUT ANY OF  
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THESE PEOPLE IN JAIL.

C. THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE CONGRESS -- WE ANTICIPATE  
THE MOST OF THE AGENDA WILL FALL TO ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN  
POLICY MATTERS, TREATED IN THE MOST SELF-CONGRATULATORY MANNER  
POSSIBLE. OUT OF THIS, HOWEVER, MAY EMERGE INTERESTING SIDE  
LIGHTS ON CZECH-SOVIET RELATIONS, EAST-WEST TRADE OR DETENTE.

13. AT BEST HUSAK'S LEADERSHIP COULD ACCRUE NEW  
CLOUT OVER THE CONSERVATIVES WHICH, WITH SOVIET ACQUIESCENCE,  
WOULD PERMIT THE PEOPLE TO TAKE OVER SOME OF THE BASIC PROBLEMS  
HERE AND, AS THE POLES AND THE HUNGARIANS HAVE DONE, TO MOVE  
OUT ON A RELATIVELY LIBERALIZED COURSE. HOWEVER, THIS IS ONLY  
THE MAXIMUM POTENTIAL POSSIBILITY. IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT  
THE 15TH CONGRESS WILL COME AND GO WITHOUT LEAVING A MARK AND  
THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL CONTINUE AS BEFORE IN ITS RATHER  
RUDDERLESS WAY.

14. USNATO MAY MAKE SUCH USE AS IT WISHES OF ABOVE MESSAGE.

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